Status
UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority species.
Nationally Scarce.
Lycopodium, sensu lato - all species EC

Taxonomy
Lycopodiopsida: Lycopodiaceae
Scientific name: Lycopodiella inundata (L.) Holub
Common names: Marsh Clubmoss, Cnwp-fwsogl y Gors

Lycopodiella inundata (Lepidotis inundata (L.) P. Beauv., Lycopodium inundatum L., L. palustre Lam.) is one of eight clubmosses in Britain. The clubmosses have either been treated taxonomically as two genera (Lycopodium and Selaginella) or Lycopodium has been split into four genera as here. The genus Lycopodiella contains about 50 species, and L. inundata is its only representative in Britain.

Biology & Distribution
Clubmosses are relatives of ferns which reproduce by spores, and they are typically low growing herbaceous plants with rather short (<1 cm) stiff leaves spirally arranged around the stems. The spores are born in little ‘cones’.

It occurs on wet, bare peaty or sandy margins of lakes, pools, flushes and trackways. Sometimes it is found submerged in shallow water. It can rapidly colonise substrates kept open by winter inundation, cattle poaching or peat cutting.

Formerly scattered almost throughout Britain and Ireland, now very local, extinct in central and eastern England (Preston et al. 2002). The Snowdonia National Park contains the Welsh stronghold. Many sites in Britain were lost before 1930, and losses have continued due to drainage, a lack of grazing and other disturbance, conversion to scrub, and eutrophication (Rasmussen & Lawesson 2002). However, it is easily overlooked and new sites have been found in recent years.

Identification & Field survey
Lycopodiella inundata can be difficult to see as it is small and creeping, but generally occurs in wet, seasonally-inundated places with open vegetation. It is often a yellowish-green colour which helps to pick it out. It is most likely to be confused with Lycopodium clavatum, which differs immediately in having leaves with long hair points.

Key characters
Procumbent perennial, stems to c. 20 cm, dying back quickly behind the green shoots; erect stems with cones to 8(-10) cm tall; leaves 4-6 mm, linear to narrowly ovate, entire, held curved to one side (Figure 1a,b); sporangium-bearing leaves broader at base (Figure 1c).
Differentiation between similar species

Key

1. Stems erect
   Huperzia / Selaginella

2. At least some stems creeping along the ground
   Diphasiastrum / Selaginella

2. Leaves in 4 rows on stems
   Lycopodium

2. Leaves in whorls or spirals

3. Leaves flattened

3. Leaves awl-like (narrow and tapered to a point)
   Lycopodiella inundata

References


A full species dossier and briefing sheet are available on the Plantlife website (www.plantlife.org.uk)

Additional photographs are available on the ARKive website (http://www.arkive.org/species).